

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Community Risk Dial Moved to Red

The COVID-19 Community Risk Dial for the week of November 16th is red, meaning residents of southwest Nebraska are at severe risk of contracting COVID-19. The risk level was raised due to high levels of community spread across several counties and the threat of the healthcare system becoming overwhelmed. The number of available hospital beds continues to decrease, and healthcare workers need relief across the state. In addition to the positive cases, there are likely many more individuals who are infected but are not getting tested. Those residents who do want to be tested may have to wait and/or travel to be tested for COVID-19.

Moving to red, Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) recommends that residents of the health district stay at home when possible, except for essential errands. If you do leave home, wear a mask or face covering. High-risk and vulnerable individuals should limit their contact with those who work outside the home. All gatherings and events are strongly discouraged until the risk dial is no longer in the red.

“This pandemic is a public health emergency, but luckily we know what to do to keep ourselves safe,” states Myra Stoney, Health Director at SWNPHD. “Just as we prepare for severe weather and follow our plans when severe weather occurs, now is the time to put our emergency plans into action. We want to limit the damage to our communities that other areas of the country have experienced during this pandemic.”

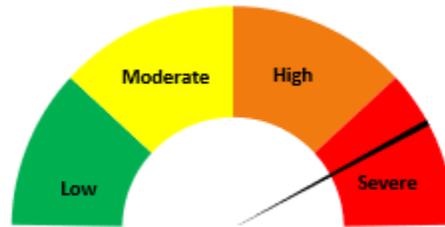
“What we need most right now is to get people in their masks. There are those who argue the science behind masking, but we have interviewed hundreds of people and our data shows that masks work,” continues Stoney. SWNPHD case investigators have noted a difference when the positive person and their contacts were all wearing masks, versus when masks were not being worn. The number of close contacts that become positive after their exposure is much lower in situations where everyone is wearing a mask properly.

SWNPHD had 240 new cases of COVID-19 reported November 10th to November 16th at noon. A breakout by county includes: Chase – 24; Dundy – 2; Frontier – 8; Furnas – 32; Hitchcock – 12; Keith – 62; Perkins – 17; Red Willow – 83; and no cases reported this week in Hayes County. Most of these cases are due to community spread, meaning the person was infected locally with no clear connection to another positive case. This brings the totals for the health district to 1371 cases with 880 cases recovered. One additional death due to COVID-19 was also reported.

COVID-19 information is available at [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and [swhealth.ne.gov](https://www.swhealth.ne.gov). You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes,

Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook.

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COVID RED: Severe Risk of COVID-19 Spread		
General Public	Outside the Home – Work, Social, in Public	At Home
Physical Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay at home unless essential personnel traveling for work, or general public acquiring medical care or food • Distance at least 6 feet from anyone outside the home • Work from home • No contact with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No distancing for people without symptoms, unless they are under quarantine as a result of being exposed to someone who is infected • Self-isolation of symptomatic persons
Face Covering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face coverings when outside of the home and near others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No face coverings for people without symptoms, unless they are under quarantine as a result of being exposed to someone who is infected • Face coverings for symptomatic people
Hand Washing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently wash hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after touching high contact surfaces, sneezing/coughing/touching face, or before eating • Use hand sanitizer when handwashing is inaccessible or infeasible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently wash hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after touching high contact surfaces, sneezing/coughing/touching face, or before eating
Illness Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If ill with Flu-like or COVID-like symptoms, Stay at Home even for essential personnel • Minimize contact with symptomatic people • Daily temperature checks at work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily temperature check • Continuously monitor for COVID-19 symptoms • Self-isolation of symptomatic persons • Contact healthcare provider if sick • Monitor the health of anyone in your home with COVID-like symptoms
Disinfecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid bare hand contact with any high touch surface • Use barrier such as paper towel or clothing when bare hand contact is unavoidable • Wash hands or apply sanitizer after touching high contact surfaces • Enhanced disinfection, especially for high contact surfaces (door/other handles, light switches, bathroom fixtures) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid bare hand contact with any high touch surface • Use barrier such as paper towel or clothing when bare hand contact is unavoidable • Wash hands or apply sanitizer after touching high contact surfaces • Enhanced disinfection, especially for high contact surfaces (door/other handles, light switches, bathroom fixtures)
At-Risk or Vulnerable Population	For adults over age 65, anyone with underlying health conditions, and other populations at heightened risk from COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home • Rely on help for needs outside the home (groceries, medications, etc.) • Distance from those working outside of the home 	